WebBuyer

SITE REVIEWS

SITE REVIEWS FOR ONLINE SHOPPING

BY KEVIN SAVETZ

CONTENTS

PC Shopping 149
ISPs 151
PC Direct Vendors 153
Home Theater 156
PC Resources.....156
Digital Music 157
Software Sites.....158
Used Books 158

PC SHOPPING

aberdeeninc.com

Targeting the savvy consumer who craves speeds and feeds, **Aberdeen** offers extensive specs on a wide variety of computers and accessories. Shoppers can see side-by-side comparisons of motherboards the company carries.

accessmicro.com

Need a gift for that special someone who has everything? Check out **Access Micro,** which stocks tons of items ranging from T1 routers to complete desktop systems. The help desk and hardware guide provide aid to first-time visitors, and the clearance area offers returned items and old inventory for below wholesale cost.

www.applied-computer.com

Selling PCs and supplies since 1984, ***Applied* Computer** promises to beat any advertised price. The company features an 80,000-product inventory; check the site's list of the 1,000 most popular ones. Beware of the handling fee tacked onto orders under $200.

blackbox.com

Get connected! Specializing in network products, **Black Box's** extensive 900-page catalog of storage, cabling, and surge-protection products—plus other connectivity accessories—can be viewed online or off.

buy.com

This monstrous, multifaceted site sells computers, electronics, books, movies, and more. With a whopping 850,000 items, **Buy.com** offers a price-matching policy on most of them.

cd-dvd-supplies.com

Want to be a media magnate? Then check out the wide selection at **CD-DVD-Supplies.com,** which sells bulk CD-R, CD-RW, DVD-R, and DVD-RAM media, as well as diskettes. Every product's unit cost is shown for easy price comparison.

cdw.com

CDW offers an enormous array of hardware and software for business. Create side-by-side comparisons in many product categories, and search out dollar-saving deals on the rebates-and-coupons page.

centore.com

The **Centore** computer and electronics store sells digital cameras, PDAs, and accoutrements such as cases and CompactFlash memory. Videophiles will drool over the selection of high-end televisions and DVD players.

compgeeks.com

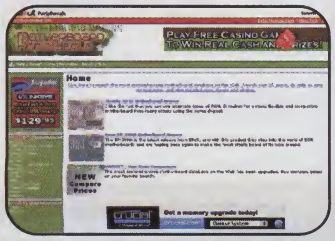
Revenge of the nerds, indeed! Shop the **Computer Geeks Discount Outlet** for new, discontinued, and refurbished computer gear. It's a trove for the do-it-yourselfer piecing together a desktop system. The site features low prices and complete specs on every product.

COMPUTER SHOPPER site OF THE month — JULY

motherboards.org

Do you push your PC to the limit? **Motherboard HomeWorld** is heaven for hardware hackers and optimistic overclockers. Dedicated to documenting the soul of the PC, this site offers motherboard specs, reviews, and articles.

Start with MOBOT, a comprehensive database of motherboards and technical specifications. It includes a massive manufacturer database and downloadable editions of hard-to-find manuals. If you're not sure what type of motherboard you've got, use the Mobo ID Tools to identify it. Then use the BIOS Upgrades feature to install the latest and greatest brains in your board.



Building a new computer? Check the price-comparison guide and Hot List for help choosing the best board for your needs. Tutorials in the Guides section tell you how to choose and install a motherboard, as well as build a PC from the ground up.

The site's Reviews section serves up blissfully techie commentary for those who live and breathe chipsets, on-board controllers, and bus speeds. Speaking of speed, the Doc Overclock section is dedicated to speeding up your processor by overclocking. Learn techniques and get answers from experts here.

RECENT WINNERS

JUNE

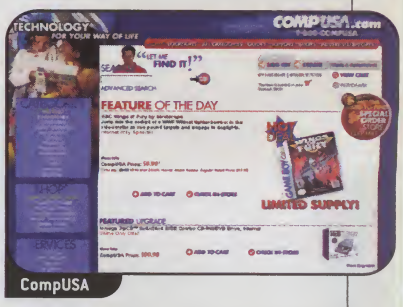
Linux2order *www.linux2order.com*

MAY

Dealnews ..... *www.dealnews.com*

compuplus.com

Comp-U-Plus offers free technical support and reasonable prices. Its catalog isn't earth-shattering in scope, but plenty of name brands are represented.



compusa.com

The well-organized **CompUSA** rounds out the usual selection of PC hardware, peripherals, and accessories with areas devoted to electronics and gadgets. The frugal won't want to overlook the site's outlet section.

computergate.com

In business since 1991, **Computer Gate** offers a 30-day satisfaction return policy on its products, which include peripherals and built-to-order PCs. Check out the Quick Index: You'll never have to poke around for the right product again.

computers4sure.com

The 19 well-stocked departments at **Computers4Sure.com** include networking equipment, projectors, PDAs, scanners, and more. Bargain hunters can quickly sniff out deals on the Clearance pages.

computershopper.com

Computer Shopper's own piece of cyberspace, **computershopper.com,** provides access to product reviews, interactive guides to choosing a desktop or a notebook, and How to Buy sections for the most popular product categories. The site can also help you find an ISP, ASP, or Web host.

SITE REVIEWS

www.computersurplusoutlet.com

You're just crazy enough to build your own desktop system, aren't you? Then you'll feel right at home at **Computer Surplus Outlet,** where you'll find closeouts, overstocks, refurbished equipment, and liquidation items. You can even stumble upon the occasional assembly-required Pentium system for less than $100.

Computer Surplus Outlet

crucial.com

One of the largest providers of memory upgrades on the Web, **Crucial Technology** offers free shipping on RAM upgrades for 10,000 computer systems. The site's Memory Selector helps buyers find the right product, and the company backs its memory with a lifetime warranty.

cyberwarehouse.com

If you can't pass up a bargain-basement sale (and don't mind waiting a few days for your item to ship), **CyberWarehouse** is definitely for you. The site offers a small selection of PCs, monitors, and peripherals.

dalco.com

Dalco Electronics stocks everything from motherboards to monitors, ships them the day you order, and includes a 30-day guarantee. Bargain hunters will want to start with the specials found on the home page, which change regularly.

dartek.com

With a roster of more than 100,000 products, **Dartek** peddles an impressive selection of hardware, software, networking equipment, and office furniture. Well-designed features include printable spec sheets, customers' product ratings, a product-watch feature, and a frequent-buyers' club.

dirtcheapdrives.com

If you can store data on it, this site sells it. **Dirt Cheap Drives** offers hard drives, CD-ROM and DVD hardware, and drive arrays, with detailed technical information about each product. This decade-old company also stocks mounting kits, media, and accessories.

www.discmarket.com

CD duplication is the name of the game at **The Disc Market.** The site sells CD duplicators and CD printers, as well as a wide variety of blank CD-Rs. Plus, you'll find jewel boxes, sleeves, and other jackets for CD storage and mailing.

ecost.com

The **eCost.com** catalog spans the full range of PC hardware and software, including ready-to-use systems, peripherals, accessories, and applications. The site features personalized product recommendations and fastidious organization.

egghead.com

Egghead.com shoppers can browse the site's hardware, software, office-product, and electronics superstores. Corporate users will find volume pricing, leasing information, and software licensing in the business center.

electrified.com

Need a serious bargain? **Electrified Discounters** specializes in products that are discontinued, second-inventory, refurbished, off-lease, or otherwise past their prime. Systems range from new Pentium II laptops to under-$200 used 486s. (Wear your sunglasses, however—this site is so garish it can be difficult to navigate.)

elinux.com

At **eLinux** you'll find a whopping 42,000 hardware and software products. The site is so serious about Linux, many of its desktop and notebook systems don't come bundled with that "other" OS. Special offerings include Linux news and a community forum.

emscomputing.com

EMS Computing offers a 40,000-product catalog, an easy-to-navigate site, and low shipping charges. A monthly newsletter delivers informative tips on choosing and using computer accessories.

firstsource.com

Focused on the technology needs of businesses, **Firstsource** offers a broad range of choices in computer hardware, rack-mount systems, network tools, phone systems, wiring, and software.

globalcomputer.com

Global Computer Supplies features same-day shipping on a Godzilla-size selection of PC components, accessories, software, furniture, and media. "Showrooms" highlight products from featured manufacturers. Watch out for the 15 percent restocking fee on nondefective returns, though.

www.gogocity.com

You'd think **GoGoCity.com** would be the one-stop shop for knee-high boots, hot pants, and all things "gogo." Not so fast, slick. This site actually features desktop and notebook computers, peripherals, software, and accessories. The strangely diverse product categories also include children's items and interior-decoration products.

inkjets.com

New inkjet cartridges are expensive, and refill kits are messy. For an inexpensive middle ground, try **Inkjets.com,** which sells remanufactured and third-party ink cartridges at fraction of the cost of name-brand ink.

insight.com

With more than 110,000 items for sale, **Insight** offers an impressive catalog of hardware and software. Customized sites are available for shoppers in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Germany.

SITE REVIEWS

jandr.com

Hardware, software, home-office products, and appliances abound at **J&R Computer World,** the New York City-based superstore famed for its selection and, ahem, "brusque" service. Avoid the attitude with this online version, which specializes in cameras, both digital and traditional film models. Product help is available via e-mail, online chat, and phone.

J&R Computer World

laptoptravel.com

Laptop Travel is road-warrior heaven! The site sells portable-computing and international-travel gear, including electrical adapters, modem converters/couplers, and security accessories. You'll find traditional and "camouflaged" laptop carrying cases, laptop RAM, and storage add-ons.

linuxcentral.com

Find your alternative at **Linux Central.** The site stocks Linux-friendly hardware, commercial software, and *operating*-system CD-ROMs. A selection of Linux-compatible T-shirts, hats, and ties will help you flash your alternative tendencies in public.

mcglen.com

McGlen Micro's specialized searches can help you find memory and other accessories compatible with your computer, printer, or copier. With the Build-To-Order Configurator, shoppers can design a custom system, which the company will configure and ship to you in two days.

mediasourceinc.com

Media Source is obsessed with storage media. This single-minded site sells CD-Rs, bulk floppies, optical discs, Zip disks, Jaz disks, DATs, and tons more. The selection of writable CDs includes brand-name and generic disks, business-card CD-Rs, and printable media.

megahaus.com

MegaHaus bills itself the "drive authority," offering a wide variety of storage solutions, including hard drives, DVD drives, RAID arrays, and CD-mastering products.

mei-microcenter.com

MEI-Micro Center offers new and refurbished desktops from Compaq, eMachines, Hewlett-Packard, and PowerSpec. You'll also find a small selection of peripherals. Rummage through the bargain bin for deals on closeouts, refurbished units, and overstocks.

memman.com

All of the desktop and laptop memory sold at **Memory Man** carries a lifetime warranty, and the site's reference guide offers RAM-configuration info for all name-brand computers. The site also sells processors, motherboards, hard drives, heat sinks, and more for intrepid system builders.

memory4less.com

Memory4Less.com offers low prices on a wide variety of RAM, including older types you may have been pulling your hair out to find. If you don't know the memory requirements of your computer or digital camera, this site will clue you in.

microx-press.com

MicroX-Press offers detailed information about most of the products it sells. The site will send you an e-mail whenever a product's price drops below a limit you set. Customers are invited to rate and review products they've tried.

www.mobile-mania.com

Quickly head to **Mobilemania.com** for digital cameras, e-mail devices, PDAs, cases, and adapters. You'll find the bountiful selection a haven for folks (like you) who are always on the go.

mobileplanet.com

MobilePlanet is home to a gaggle of high-tech tools and toys for mobile professionals. The selection includes handheld and notebook computers, PDAs, wireless-communication products, and travel-size printers and scanners.

INTERNET SERVICE PROVIDERS

bluelight.com

Affiliated with retail powerhouse Kmart, **BlueLight.com** offers 12 hours of monthly access for free, or 100 hours for $9.95. Buying products from Kmart's online store earns you additional online time.

download.att.net/partners

AT&T WorldNet offers six e-mail addresses and 60MB of personal Web space. If you're willing to endure the ad-laden navigation bar, the cost is a mere $4.95 per month for 150 hours of access—or pay $14.95 for no ads. Unlimited access is $21.95.

www.earthlink.com

At **EarthLink,** $19.95 buys unlimited Internet access, with one e-mail box and 6MB for your Web site. For $2 more, the "family pack" adds five e-mail addresses, each with 6MB of Web space.

essentials.msn.com/access

Microsoft's **MSN** Internet access offers nine e-mail accounts and 30MB for Web pages. It will cost you $21.95 for unlimited monthly access, or $9.95 for 20 hours of online fun. For a limited time, new subscribers get a free copy of Microsoft Money.

free.aol.com

America Online, the nation's most popular ISP, offers five pricing plans, including one for $21.95 per month that gives unlimited access. Extras include members-only forums, 14MB of Web-page space, and up to seven e-mail boxes. Sign up, and you'll get up to 700 free hours your first month.

free.compuserve.com/trycsfree

Sporting a flashy new graphical interface, **CompuServe** is America Online's little brother. The service costs $9.95 per month for 20 hours, $19.95 for unlimited monthly access. Customers get seven e-mail addresses and 5MB of Web space.

juno.com

The largest free ISP, **Juno** offers free, ad-sponsored Internet access, as well as a $14.95 plan for 250 monthly hours. Either way, you'll get 12MB for Web pages.

netzero.com

NetZero provides 40 hours of monthly access—for free! If you run out of time, a $9.95 "extended access pass" buys unlimited time for the rest of the month.

prodigy.com

Twenty bucks a month buys you unlimited access and 6MB of Web space at **Prodigy.** If the kids and pets need access too, $2 more buys 10 additional e-mail boxes.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TRACY WALKER

SITE REVIEWS

motherboards.com

With a wide selection of motherboards from nine manufacturers, do-it-yourselfers can handpick the perfect innards for their new PCs at **Motherboards.com.** Order a motherboard and CPU together, and the company will configure and test them for you.

mouseballz.com

Roll with it! When gunk and grime mess up your mouse, visit **MBZ Distributing.** This site's inventory is dedicated to—no fooling—replacement mouse balls. It carries balls for PC and Mac mice, and offers a quantity discount to customers ordering balls in bulk.

www.mouseballz.com
We've got replacement Mouse Balls!
Welcome
Your one stop shopping for replacement mouse balls for Mac/Apple and IBM Compatible mice.
MBZ Distributing

www.mwave.com

In addition to PC systems and peripherals, **Multiwave Direct** stocks notebook accessories, videoconferencing equipment, and network tools. Top sellers, "blowout specials," and rebate forms are a click away from the home page.

neutronet.com

Neutron carries thousands of computer systems and peripherals from nearly 400 manufacturers and distributors. A handy toolbox offers easy access to best buys, help for first-time buyers, and a massive manufacturer directory.

newegg.com

You won't have to shell out big bucks or scramble for hardware at **NewEgg.com**. Peck at the site's listings of new products and top sellers, then take a crack at the specials. Order carefully—the 15 percent restocking fee might make you squawk.

notebooksuperstore.com

Devoted exclusively to portable computers, **NotebookSuperStore.com** sells more than 100 different laptop models from nine manufacturers. You'll see technical details about each model, and a comparison tool helps you zero in on the best portable for you.

onvia.com

Onvia.com, a business-to-business computer outlet, offers a handful of features that distinguish it as a small-business resource, including a services marketplace, buying guides, and active community forums.

outpost.com

Outpost.com sells 170,000 products—a full range of computer hardware, plus cameras, electronics, and innovative specialty products from partner companies.

palmgear.com

Users of handhelds will appreciate the extensive selection of free and commercial programs downloadable from **PalmGear HQ.** Shoppers can buy PDA hardware and accessories, including carrying cases and hip styli. Sign up for an e-mailing list to receive information about new software, news, and user tips.

pcconnection.com

PC Connection offers nifty bargains on a colossal variety of PC and Macintosh products. Smart Selectors ease the searching process for shoppers looking for turnkey systems, cameras, printers, monitors, or memory to fit specific guidelines.

www.pcliquidator.com

The getting's good at **PC Liquidator,** a site that offers clearance, refurbished, and overstocked hardware and software. The inventory is always changing and usually inexpensive. You can find many hardware choices for under $10—some for less than $5.

pcmall.com

Shoppers at **PC Mall** receive free lifetime technical support on the site's vast selection of computers, hardware, and software. The site's business-solutions forum offers corporate leasing and volume pricing. Appleheads can find all their favorite Macintosh products at the **Mac Mall** sister site ***(www.macmall.com)***.

pczone.com

PC Zone carries an impressive selection of all things PC. You'll find links to a clearance area and other stores: **Mac Zone** and **Electronics Zone.** Printable rebate coupons can save you some cash.

provantage.com

Provantage offers PC products from more than 1,000 manufacturers, including a large selection of books and training materials. The site's Personal Tracking List feature lets customers build a list of product bookmarks, then monitor prices and availability.

shopper.cnet.com

The **CNET Shopper** search engine takes the guesswork out of finding a deal on hardware, software, and accessories. The price-drop-alerts feature will send you e-mail when the cost of a coveted gadget falls. (CNET Networks is *Computer Shopper's* parent company.)

shoppingplanet.com

Do-it-yourselfers will appreciate **Shopping Planet's** inventory of barebones systems, add-on cards, and kits.

sparco.com

Looking for that something extra? Check out **Sparco.com's** list of products that come bundled with "free stuff." The site stocks more than 130,000 products, and it offers a list of discounted items for students and faculty members of academic institutions.

ssdonline.com

At **State Street Direct,** shoppers will discover a huge selection of computers and imaging products. Digital-camera shoppers will find many items of interest, including customized comparison charts.

staples.com

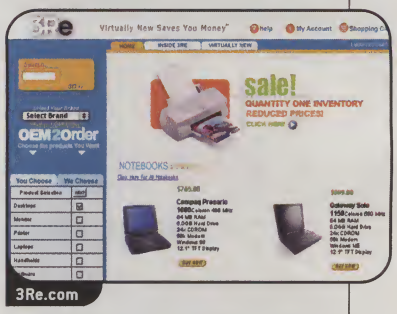
Yeah, they got that. **Staples'** Web site offers a liberal price-matching policy on computer accessories, software, and office supplies. If you order similar items often, you can set up personalized shopping lists. The company can occasionally take its time shipping items out to you, though, so beware.

2for1inkjet.com

Searching for incredible deals on printing supplies? Check out **2 For 1 Inkjet,** which offers two-for-one prices on toner and ink cartridges for every brand of inkjet and laser printer, copier, and fax machine. Beware: Shipping can be slow, and there's no order-tracking feature.

3re.com

If you can tolerate hand-me-downs to save some bucks, check out **3Re.com,** which repairs and repackages factory-returned computers and electronic equipment.



tccomputers.com

In business since 1988, **TC Computers** sells fully configured systems, motherboards, and peripherals. The company's specialty is motherboards; buyers can choose to have motherboards and processors pre-assembled and tested for no extra charge.

tcwo.com

Thompson's Computer Warehouse Outlet offers only a small selection of computer products. You may find only a dozen monitors or four CD-ROM drives, but the prices are fantastic.

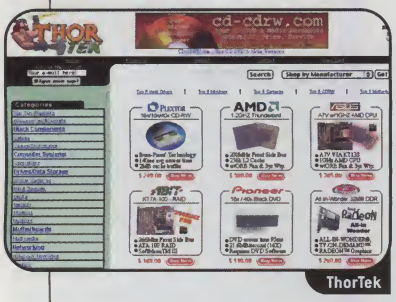
techstore.com

TechStore.com offers hardware in dozens of categories and highlights monthly top sellers. The site also sells software, ranging from productivity suites to children's titles.

thenerds.net

With no misgivings about the tech-savvy of their company or customers,

TheNerds.net offers 60,000 computer products, ranging from cables and connectors to graphics cards, at its fast and friendly site. The liberal 30-day return policy will protect you from getting stuck with the wrong product.



ThorTek

thortek.com

A wide array of computer accessories awaits **ThorTek** shoppers. The site provides quick links to the "top 5" products in several categories, including hard drives, monitors, digital cameras, and CD-RW drives.

tigerdirect.com

TigerDirect's site offers 40,000 products, including custom-built computers that are tested and shipped within 48 hours. Up for a little adventure? Order a build-it-yourself custom PC kit, and let the fun begin!

truedataonline.com

True Data Technology stocks an exceptional catalog of motherboards, hard drives, and other upgrades. The site also features communication essentials for businesses, including DSL equipment and telephony products.

usbstuff.com

USB Stuff specializes in Universal Serial Bus-equipped gadgets, including digital cameras, CD-RW drives, printers, modems, hubs, and input devices. Uh-oh: Poor site design makes navigation difficult. A sister site at ***www.firewirestuff.com*** stocks IEEE 1394-compatible hardware.

usedcomputer.com

Used Computer Mall is a marketplace for, you guessed it, used computer equipment. Shoppers can list hardware to sell, or look for items to buy using the free classified ads. The site will also help you appraise equipment.

warehouse.com

The four "warehouses" under **MicroWarehouse's** roof sell PC hardware, Mac products, datacomm components, and supplies. The site accepts corporate, educational, and government accounts, and offers business leases on many products.

PC DIRECT VENDORS

www.alienware.com

Alienware won't abduct your pets, but the company can build you a high-end gaming machine, desktop video system, or high-performance workstation. Cases are available in a rainbow of out-of-this-world colors.

buyabs.com

Exceptional customer support on custom-configured desktop and notebook systems is the goal at **ABS Computer Technologies.** All systems include a 30-day money-back guarantee. Some computers are available with Linux preinstalled.

buy-atlas.com

Atlas Micro offers desktop PCs built around Pentium, Celeron, and AMD processors. Buyers can use drop-down menus to build a custom configuration and are protected by a reasonable 30-day return policy.

compaq.com

Three arms of **Compaq Computer's** site offer computers for everyone. See the Compaq AtHome division ***(athome.compaq.com)*** for home and home-office systems, DirectPlus ***(www.directplus.compaq.com)*** for business PCs and servers, or the Compaq Factory Outlet Superstore ***(compaqfactoryoutlet.com)*** for big bargains.

csd.toshiba.com

Here's the Web home for **Toshiba's** stylish portables and desktop systems. The site's build-to-order system doesn't offer as many options as some other sites do, but it does offer plenty of extended-warranty and lease options.

cyberpowerinc.com

Each **CyberPower** PC includes a three-year warranty and 30-day money-back guarantee. The site's service area includes downloadable drivers and lifetime tech support.

dell.com

Dell Computer's electronic storefront has always led the way in terms of ease of use. The site is jam-packed with detailed information that makes it a snap to match a machine to your needs. Each system is configurable to the nth degree via drop-down menus, and you can get quick access to online support customized for your PC.

www.fosa.com

Fosa's built-to-order notebook computers include a 15-day money-back guarantee with no restocking fee and lifetime technical support. We just wish the site didn't depend so heavily on the Macromedia Flash plug-in. Sheesh!

www.fujitsu-pc.com

Fujitsu's site focuses on portable computing, including notebook PCs and pen-based tablet computers. Each computer includes several warranty options. A trade-in program offers cash back on your old computer when you upgrade to certain models.

Fujitsu

gateway.com

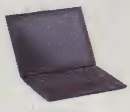
One of the biggest players in online computer sales, **Gateway's** enormous and informative site sells custom-built desktops and portables, delivering them on time 98 percent of the time, according to BizRate.com.

hpshopping.com

At this site, **Hewlett-Packard** sells its lines of desktop and notebook computers, handhelds, PDAs, digital cameras, and printers. Business leases are available, and the site makes repeat purchases easy for businesses and individuals.

ShopIBM

ibm.com/products



ShopIBM sells business and home computers, notebooks, servers, thin clients, networking equipment, and peripherals. The build-to-order option allows buyers to customize a new desktop PC. Linux is an option on laptop models.

SITE REVIEWS

idot.com

From low-cost budget models to powerful monster machines, **iDot** offers customized desktop and notebook computers with a good return policy.

kaypro.com

You can design your own desktop system at **Kaypro,** but the custom configurator doesn't offer as much flexibility as we'd like. The site's notebook area carries a wide selection of Fujitsu portables.

microexpress.net

Micro Express offers built-to-order desktop and notebook computers featuring AMD and Intel processors. Each system includes a 30-day guarantee and a two- or four-year warranty. Business leases are available.

HOME THEATER

avsforum.com

She blinded me with science! The **AV Science Ultimate Forum** is a bustling message board dedicated to discussion of home theater and HDTV. Topics include satellite systems, configuration, and "secrets" of home theater. The forum is the official tech-help area for several manufacturers, including ReplayTV, TiVo, and Harman International.

crutchfield.com

In business for 26 years, **Crutchfield** assembles an impressive catalog of audio and video products for your home and car. Inexpensive two-day shipping is standard for most orders. The extensive Info Center offers glossaries, guides to choosing components, and installation tips.

800.com

Home electronics is the name of the game at **800.com**, a site stocking an unbeatable selection of home-audio and -video components, digital cameras, and personal audio devices. Customer service includes an advice center, live online help, and community forums.

getplugged.com

Plug it in, turn it on, turn it up. **GetPlugged.com** offers oodles of home-theater and electronics gadgets. Use the Build a System feature for instant assistance in creating a home theater suited to your needs. Plug in to the Idea Gallery for fantastic (although not always affordable) concepts in home theater.

harveyonline.com

Harvey Electronics is an upscale retailer of home-theater products that has been in business since 1927. The Web store sells high-end TV, satellite, and home-audio products, plus furniture to put it all on. The site can't deliver all products everywhere, so enter your ZIP code to find out about delivery limitations.

hifi.com

Hifi.com has home-audio and home-theater products to please budget shoppers and discriminating audiophiles. Unique features and policies, including price-matching, a satisfaction guarantee, and extended warranty refunds, set it apart from other consumer-electronics stores.

micronpc.com

One of the largest direct PC vendors, **Micronpc.com** sells computers to home-office users, larger businesses, government buyers, and buyers outside the United States. The Factory Outlet offers refurbished and discontinued systems.

www.mwmicro.com

Go MidWest, young man. **MidWest Micro** offers down-home, custom-configured desktops, servers, and notebook systems. The site's Service Center is exemplary, with a troubleshooting knowledge base and driver downloads that cater to your particular system.

nutrend.com

Custom-configure a home or business desktop PC at **NuTrend Computer Products.** The company stocks machines running your choice of Intel or AMD processors. Each system comes with a three-year warranty.

www.polywell.com/onlinestore

Polywell Computers may not be a household name, but the company offers desktops, workstations, and servers that are worth a look. You'll find massive custom-configuration options.

www.sagernotebook.com

Specializing in notebook computers, **Sager** offers a variety of options, from budget machines to speedy multimedia units. Service includes a 72-hour repair-turnaround guarantee and lifetime free tech support. Business leases are available.

shopprostar.com

Each computer in **ProStar Computer's** line of notebook PCs is backed by a 30-day money-back guarantee, a speedy-repair promise, and free tech support. The handy comparison tool helps buyers zero in on the best model.

sonystyle.com

SonyStyle sells Sony's line of VAIO desktops and notebooks, plus digital cameras, displays, and storage devices. The Xtras Direct section of the site carries add-ons for PCs, digital cameras, and other equipment.

store.apple.com

Apple Computer's well-designed site allows you to custom-configure any Macintosh computer and offers a wide array of Mac-compatible software and accessories. Beware the one-click ordering feature, however—using it may be a bit too convenient for impulse buyers!

www.tiny.com

Britain's favorite direct computer seller is now targeting us Yanks. **Tiny Computers'** line of prebuilt desktop and notebook PCs includes models for professionals and first-time buyers.

unitedmicro.com

Take home a preconfigured Intel- or AMD-based PC, or start with a barebones system and let **United Micro** install the components of your choice.

www.winbook.com

Focusing exclusively on portables, **WinBook Computer** offers machines with a 30-day money-back guarantee, a one-year warranty, and free technical support. Ironically, some of the site's best deals, the daily "Web specials," can only be ordered by phone.

Xi Computer

xicomputer.com

Xi Computer offers high-performance workstations for CAD professionals, Linux aficionados, and other power users. Desktops feature your choice of Intel or AMD processors, including powerful gigahertz and dual-processor systems.

PC RESOURCES

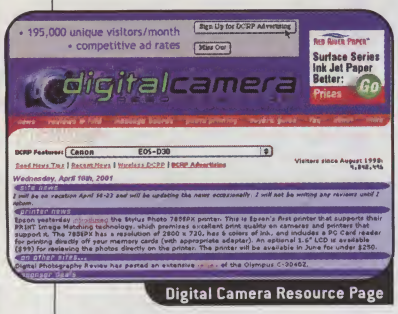
consumerreview.com

ConsumerReview.com helps consumers research products before they buy. The site provides more than 200,000 reviews and ratings for tech gadgets and products for the home, car, and kids.

dailyedeals.com

DailyeDeals' coupon pages offer codes that will instantly shave $5 to $50 off the bottom line at major online retailers. The First Time area links to substantial discounts for first-time customers.

SITE REVIEWS



Digital Camera Resource Page

dcresource.com

The **Digital Camera Resource Page** is an unbiased, comprehensive source of information for digital-camera buyers and owners. Shoppers can glean necessary info from the FAQ page, buyer's guide, message boards, and reviews.

dealnews.com

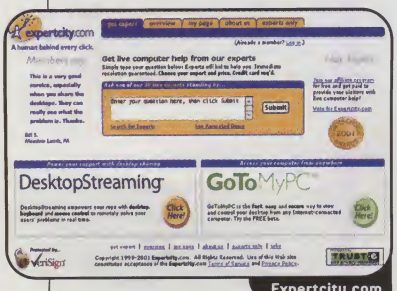
Deal yourself in! **Dealnews** is a fantastic buyer's guide that reports on low-price specials in Web stores. Updated daily, the site discovers deals that range from tempting to nearly impossible to resist. Check out sister site **Dealmac** for Mac-oriented gotta-haves.

dealtime.com

DealTime.com is an independent comparison-shopping service. The site aggregates prices from hundreds of online merchants, auctions, and classified sites. Also, 21st-century shoppers can compare prices by cell phone or wireless PDA, thanks to the site's mobile service.

expertcity.com

Expertcity.com promises live, 24-hour computer assistance from real human beings. When you pose a question, experts across the Internet bid for your business. Read their profiles, compare prices, then choose the expert you like.



Expertcity.com

56k.com

See **56K.com** for a primer on 56kbps modems, a price shopper for buying a modem at the best price, and downloads of the latest firmware. Read the special report on the new V.92 modems.

www.ftc.gov

The **Federal Trade Commission's** Web site is packed with useful information about consumer fraud and how to avoid it—online and off. If you've had a problem with a merchant, you can file a complaint with the FTC Bureau of Consumer Protection online.

gomez.com

Gómez.com offers ratings and customer reviews of e-commerce sites in two dozen categories, ranging from Web-based computer stores to drugstores, apparel vendors to online brokers. Check the ratings on ease of use, customer confidence, and cost.

www.linhardware.com

Will that sleek new laptop run Linux? Find out with the **ZDNet Linux Hardware Database,** where users share their experiences regarding which hardware's compatible with Linux—and which isn't. For the stuff that is, download the appropriate driver and put it to work. (ZDNet is owned by CNET Networks, *Computer Shopper's* parent company.)

nextag.com

NexTag is a sophisticated buying service that can help frugal shoppers find the lowest possible prices on computer equipment, electronics, books, music, and videos. Entering your ZIP code allows NexTag to calculate shipping and tax for accurate pricing.

pdastreet.com

PDAStreet.com, a resource for users of Palm, Windows CE, Psion, and Visor personal digital assistants, offers message boards, software downloads, news, and product reviews.

pricepda.com

PricePDA.com is a price-comparison engine for buyers of personal digital assistants, accessories, and software. Users can access the site anywhere via WAP-enabled cell phones.

resellerratings.com

Want a second opinion before you share your credit-card number with an unfamiliar online merchant? Check **ResellerRatings.com,** which provides customer evaluations of online hardware vendors. Take reviews with a grain of salt: We've seen dozens of negative messages posted by one (very unhappy) person.

techsupportalert.com

Tech Support Alert helps computer users locate the best tech-support information on the Net. You'll find reviews of free and pay-for-support sites, plus how-to guides for Windows users.

usb.org

Check **USB.org** for technical information about the Universal Serial Bus, as well as answers to frequently asked questions and information about devices that use it. You'll find information for shoppers as well as developers.

windrivers.com

WinDrivers.com is a comprehensive archive of drivers and DLL files for hard drives, sound cards, scanners, and other hardware. The site also provides links to antivirus updates and BIOS upgrades.

DIGITAL MUSIC

aimster.com

Aimster is a Napster-like (translation: the record companies won't like it) file-sharing tool that piggybacks onto the Net's instant-messaging services. It allows users to trade MP3s as well as photos, text, and digital files. You can trade music with selected friends rather than sharing with the whole world, a la Napster.

emusic.com

A popular source for guilt-free MP3s, **EMusic.com** sells 160,000 songs by 8,500 artists, including many big names. You can purchase an individual song, usually for 99 cents, or download an entire album for about $9. The Free Tracks area features a lengthy list of songs you can download at no cost.

freenet.sourceforge.net

Freenet is another peer-to-peer alternative for sharing files, MP3 and otherwise. Unlike Napster, it is anonymous and uncensorable. It's also not searchable, making it less easy to use.

gnutella.wego.com

It's the closest thing to the good old days of Napster. **Gnutella** is a peer-to-peer search system that is very similar to Napster, but not limited to MP3 music files. Download a Gnutella-compatible client, linked from this site, and start searching.

liquidaudio.com

Would you like a drink with that? **Liquid Audio** offers a nice 'n' legal alternative to MP3s, serving up songs from major labels in a proprietary format. You can buy music on a per-track or per-album basis from the site's affiliates, then listen to the tunes on your PC or burn them to audio CD.

MP3.com

MP3.com is a melodious source of free and legal music. The selection includes major-label bands and little-known groups just waiting to be discovered. The site also provides great tools for organizing your music.

SITE REVIEWS

SOFTWARE SITES

atomicpark.com

AtomicPark.com specializes in business software, offering free shipping on all orders. Categories include voice-recognition software and fax apps.

beyond.com

Beyond.com presents software for PC, Mac, and PDA users. In addition to traditional boxed titles, the site sells downloadable software from major publishers and a respectable selection of computer hardware. (CNET Networks, *Computer Shopper's* parent company, is an investor in Beyond.com.)

bigclearance.com

You don't have to pay big money for a big box of big-name software. **BigClearance.com** sells "current version software at clearance prices," most with free shipping. The site carries a smallish selection of titles from Borland, Intuit, Macromedia, Microsoft, and other major publishers.

buycheapsoftware.com

The name sums it up. **Buy Cheap Software** offers a relatively small selection—about 300 titles—at deep discounts. The site does sell programs from well-known publishers, including Adobe, Corel, Lotus, and Microsoft.

chumbo.com

In addition to tons of Windows programs and DVDs, **Chumbo.com** features a Linux Store that sells applications for the popular alternative OS.

cws.internet.com

Stroud's Consummate Winsock Applications List is the ultimate one-stop download site for Internet software, including Web-development tools, browsers, and chat clients. You'll find comprehensive file lists, ratings, and extensive reviews. A free newsletter provides summaries of new software releases.

download.cnet.com

CNET Download.com will help you find shareware and free software, linking to thousands of PC, Mac, Linux, and PDA titles. Well-written newsletters and down-to-earth reviews help you to locate the perfect program. (CNET Networks is *Computer Shopper's* parent company.)

ebgames.com

The online arm of the ubiquitous Electronics Boutique stores, **EBGames.com** is a video-game player's paradise, offering 3,000 products. Its home page highlights new releases, coming-soon titles, and top sellers.

freewarefiles.com

Windows users who want software without having to spend any money can start at **Freeware Files.com.** This site features quick links to the most popular giveaways.

jumbo.com

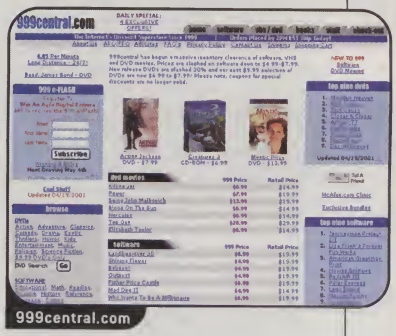
Jumbo is the perfect name for this monstrous file archive, which features programs for sale, commercial-application demos, shareware, and freeware. Jumbo Guides offer articles on backing up, sharing MP3s, and other computing topics.

linux2order.com

Linux2order offers more than 10,000 Linux and open-source applications. You can pick and choose software, or grab a prebuilt distribution. Get your software on a $5 custom-burned CD, as a free standard download, or as a high-speed download for a subscription fee.

999central.com

The price is right at **999central.com,** which stocks 500 software and 200 DVD titles, most for $9.99. Educational, entertainment, and lifestyle applications are the most common.



www.pdfstore.com

The **PDF Store** specializes in software for creating and working with Portable Document Format files, carrying a convenient, focused selection. The site sells shareware and commercial software for immediate download.

softwareoutlet.com

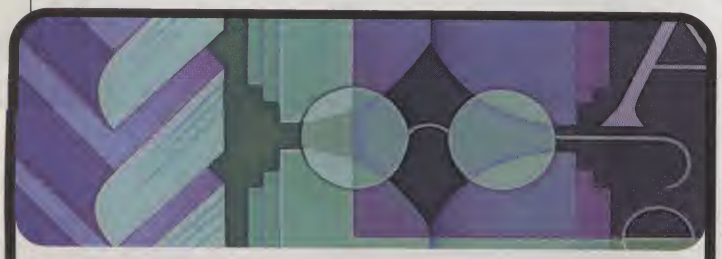
Come check it out, cheapskates! **SoftwareOutlet.com's** a veritable bargain bin. You'll find dirt-cheap apps—older versions, titles from defunct companies, or just plain funky stuff.

www.tucows.com

It's not just bovine bliss: **Tucows** is also an incredible archive of freeware and shareware. Plenty of local mirror sites keep the download process speedy. The category list and reviews make finding the software you seek a breeze.

zdnet.com/downloads

Dude, you'll need more bandwidth. Download shareware, freeware, and demos from **ZDNet Downloads.** The site offers daily software highlights and quick links to the week's most popular software. Every program is rated, reviewed, and checked for viruses, so your new software won't come with any unpleasant surprises. (ZDNet is owned by CNET Networks, *Computer Shopper's* parent company.) ▼



USED BOOKS

abebooks.com

Advanced Book Exchange links shoppers to a network of independent booksellers. Search by author, title, or keyword, or just browse your favorite genres. Collectors can limit searches to first editions or signed tomes.

alibris.com

The elegant **Alibris** offers features for readers, book collectors, and librarians. Search the million-book catalog, then use the message boards to talk to book experts.

bibliofind.com

A fantastic search tool for used and rare books, **Bibliofind** searches 20 million titles at thousands of independent booksellers. Use the free "personal want list" feature for e-mail updates when your favorite titles or authors turn up.

bookfinder.com

BookFinder.com searches 20,000 booksellers for millions of new, used, rare, and out-of-print books. Be patient: This tool is thorough but slow.

half.com

The direct-sales arm of auction giant eBay, **Half.com** specializes in fixed-price, previously owned books, movies, music, and video games. When searching for books, the site ranks them by condition and price.

powells.com

Book lovers will surely know **Powell's,** the independently owned book megastore in Portland, Ore. Search the site's renowned selection of new and used books, browse the staff picks, then join an online reading group.

used.addall.com

A fast and customizable metasearch engine for used books, **AddAll** can be a one-stop shopping source for bibliophiles. It will translate prices into your currency of choice and sort hits any way you prefer. It will not, however, read the books to you.